



You're Already Home Where You Feel Loved by onkei

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Summary: Attempted to create an aesthetic of a winter scene in the cabin in the woods. Hopper & El wake up Christmas eve morning. / Very brief one-shot, sweet, father-daughter moment.

You're Already Home Where You Feel Loved

Cold bare feet on unfinished, wooden floors. The smell of pine. Silence outside, just falling snow. A Christmas tree in the corner, the colored lights dimly illuminating the pizza box, beer and coke cans on the coffee table. Remnants of the movie marathon that was had the night before. A man looked cozy on the couch, like he had been there for some time afterwards. Dark circles confirmed that he hadn't slept much.

"Mornin'."

"Good morning," she responded sleepily.

The rhythmic creaking of each floorboard under her was a melody she knew all too well. The sound was second-nature and she almost sang along in her head.

"Put some socks on, kid."

The warm, yet authoritative voice fell on indifferent ears.

There was a light show going on outside. The wood-burning stove didn't even give her pause - she was mesmerized by the view out the window above their offensively-tiny table for two. An ashtray, cigarettes, a fresh cup of coffee resided there, among some other scratch paper and rubbish.

It was a clear, Christmas Eve morning. The snowflakes were so large, falling heavily on their cabin porch. It was as if someone dumped a never-ending rain of sparkling confetti from the sky. The sunlight danced on each snowflake individually, giving a dazzling performance. She felt drawn to the trees and memories of living in the winter of the woods came back to her. Suddenly, she felt happy to be inside after all.

Breathing deeply, a calmness fell over her. She tried to clear her mind completely and see as much as she could. She felt something new - a sensation swelling up in her chest and tingling her fingers and toes ever so slightly. It was more complex than "friends." This was a new

kind of happy feeling.

The bear of a man rose up from the couch, groaning in protest. He moved for the kitchen.

"Would you look at that?" commenting on the winter scene, picking up his abandoned cup of coffee and surrendering to an enormous yawn.

He takes a sip of the black coffee before setting it down again to light a cigarette. The tobacco smell mixed with a subtle fragrance of cologne. The scent is woven in the fabric of a red flannel he wore, as it always hung on his uniform, his coat. This scent was comforting. It was Hopper.

Through tired eyes and a drag of his cigarette he gave her a playful smile.

"Your socks. Where are they?"

"In the bedroom," she responded.

"Get them. Before I put them on you myself. You don't want that." Another sip of coffee. It seems like the adults like for them to go together. Eleven wanted to try it sometime.

"Why is that?" she challenged him.

Another drag of his cigarette, blinking in the sunlight invading the cabin. "Because I will most-likely tickle the shit out of your cold feet."

These were the best kind of laughs she had recently discovered: the kinds where you don't see it coming and you feel it come from your belly. Her wild curly hair bounced slightly as she let out an echoing laugh that filled the tiny, cold cabin. Hopper's face was stern and theatrically concerned for her.

"Does this look like a joke to you?" She was filled with a contagious delight, shaking her head, trying to stifle the laughter threatening to spill out.

"I'm not sure you understand. This is a serious condition I have: if I

see cold feet, I have to tickle them."

El shook her head in defiance, smiling and holding her sides as she already felt the tickling sensation. "Okay, I am going to put socks-

"No? Okay, that's fine. I warned you." He puts down his coffee and makes for her. She bolts for the bedroom, "No, I'm going!"

Hopper didn't have the energy to chase her. He was satisfied that she didn't call his bluff and left him there smiling to himself.

I love her, he thought to himself. *The kid stole my heart.*